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~~C O N F I D E N T I A L~~ CO-VE BORDER

MSGNO 200 (STXX) S4A *31/07/82* *00:45*
ZCZC 05:41:37Z (ST)

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

STATE

25X1

82 9149767 SCO VC 9149767
TOR: 302222Z JUL 82

00 RUEAIIB
ZNY CCCCC ZOC STATE ZZH
STU9514
00 RUEHC
DE RUESRS #7659 2112135
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 302114Z JUL 82
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1693
INFO RUESBG/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA 6137
RULFALJ/USCINCSO QUARRY HTS PN
RUEKJCS/DIA WASHDC
RUEEBGA/COMUSFORCARIB KEY WEST
BT
EZ1:
~~C O N F I D E N T I A L~~ CARACAS 7559
EZ2:
E.O. 12065: GDS 07/30/88 (MURRAY, LEWIS) OR-P
TAGS: PEPR, VE CO
SUBJECT: GOV DOWNPLAYS IMPORTANCE OF
BORDER INCIDENTS IN BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH COLOMBIA.
REF: CARACAS 7599
1. (U) ALTHOUGH VENEZUELAN OFFICIALS SEEMUNABLE TO
SPEAK WITH ONE VOICE CONCERNING THE ALLEGED BORDER
INCIDENTS THAT OCCURRED IN RECENT DAYS (REFTEL), IT
IS CLEAR FROM VARIOUS STATEMENTS OF PUBLIC OFFICIALS THAT THE
GOV WISHES TO DOWNPLAY THEIR IMPORTANCE. FLLOWING IS A SUMMARY
OF RELEVANT STATEMENTS REPORTED IN THE JULY 30 LOCAL PRESS:
-- REFUSING TO COMMENT ON THE INCIDENTS, INTEROR
MINISTER LUCIANO VALERO TOLD NEWSMEN JULY 29 THAT
THE GOV "IS STILL TRYING TO KNOW EXACTLY WHAT HAPPENED."
HE ASSSURED TEM, HOWEVER, THAT RELATIONS BETWEEN COLOMBIA
AND VENEZUELA "WOULD NOT BE AFFECTED BY INSIGNIFICANT
INCIDENTS THAT OCCUR IN THEIR BORDER AREAS."
-- GENERAL RAMON MENDOZA IBARRA, DIRECTOR OF FRONTIER
AFFAIRS AT THE FOREIGN MINISTRY, TOLD NEWSMEN THE SAME
AFTERNOON THAT TWO INCIDENTS HAD TAKEN PLACE; ONE ON
JULY 9AS DESCRIBED BY COLOMBIAN AUTHORITIES,AND
ANOTHER ON JULY 22 INVOLVING A HELICOPTER INCURSION
INTO COLOMBIAN TERRITORY. HE CLAIMED, HOWEVER, THAT NO SHOTS
HAD BEEN
FIRED AS THE COLOMBIANS ALLEGED.
-- ACTING DEFENSE MINISTER GEN. MAZIMILIANO HERNANDEZ
VAZQUEZ (THE MINISTER ISSIN EUROPE) ALSO SPOKE TO NEWSMEN JULY

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29 AND TOLD THEM THAT IN FACT ONE INCIDENT HAD TAKEN PLACE "WEEKS AGO
"
INVOLVING A VENEZUELAN ARMY PATROL BUT THAT THE MATTER HAD BEEN
RESOLVED QUICKLY"AND IN A FIRENDLY WAY BECAUSE THE
COLIMBIAN AUTHORITIES UNDERSTOOD THE SITUATION." HE
DENIED REPORTS OF A VENEZUELAN HELICOPTER INCURSION
POINTING OUT THAT VENEZUELA"S ARE PAINTED
GREEN OR WITH CAOUFLAGE AND NOT "WHITE" AS THE ONE WHICH
THE COLOMBIANS SAID WAS INVOLVED IN THE JULY 14 AND
27 INCIDENTS.
2. (C) WE WERE RELIABLY INFORMED EVENING
OF JULY 29 THAT AT THE BRIEFING OF ARMY STAFF
REPORTED REFTEL, THE BRIEGING OFFICER DENIED VENEZUELAN
ARMY INVOLVEMENT IN ANY ALLEGED BORDER INCIDENTS. ON
JULY 30,HOWEVER, A HIGH-RANKING VENEZUELAN
MILITARY INTELLIGENCE OFFICER TOLD DAO OFFICERS THAT THE
TWO HELICOPTER INCIDENTS CITED BY THE COLOMBIANS IN
FACT DID OCCUR. SUPPOSEDLY, IN BOTH INCIDENTS A
VENEZUELAN NATIONAL GUARD HELICOPTER WAS IN HOT PURSUIT
OF "CONTRABANDISTAS" AND INADVERTENTLY CROSSED THE
POORLY MARKED BORDER. THE HELICOPTERS MAY HAVE FIRED
ON THE "CONTRABANDISTAS" WHILE OVER COLOMBIAN TERRITORY,
BUT THEIR PILOTS WERE UNAWARE THEY HAD STRAYED OUT OF
VENEZUELA. VENEZUELAN AIR FORCE INTELLIGENCE SOURCES
HAVE ALSO TOLD US THAT THE TWO COUNTRIES" APPROPRIATE
REGIONAL COMMANDERS HAVE BEEN ENGAGED IN "FRIENDLY
DIALOGUE" OVER THE INCIDENTS SINCE THE FIRST TOOK PLACE
O/A JULY 9.
3. (C) COMMENT: PRESUMABLY, SOME SORT OF INCIDENTS DID TAKE
PLACE, ALTHOUGH IT SEEMS THAT THE VENEZUELANS ARE STILL
GETTING CONFLICTING REPORTS ON DETAILS. SUCH INCIDENTS
ARE COMMON AND THESE ARE NOT BEING TREATED BY THE GOV AS
REPRESENTEING ANY MAJOR PROBLEMS. THIS IS PERHAPS IN
PART BECAUSE THE VENEZUELAN UNITS WERE EVIDENTLY AT
FAULT, WITH COMOMBIAN,AND NOT VENEZUELAN, TERRITORY BEING
VIOLATED. MORE IMPORTANTLY, HOWEVER THE GOV IS MORE
CONCERNED ABOUT ITS PROBLEMS ONTHE EASTERN BORDER WITH
GUYANA, AND TROUBLES WITH COLOMBIA ARE SIMPLY NOT WELCOME.
4. (C) IT IS INTERESTING THAT NEWS OF THESE INCIDENTS
BROKE (FROM COLOMBIA) SIMULTANEOUS WITH THE JULY 29
"GOODWILL"" MEETING AT SAN ANTONIO BETWEEN PRESIDENTS
HERRERA AND TURBAY. THIS STRIKES US AS ODD IN
VIEW OF THE FACT THAT THE INCIDENTS ALLEGEDLY TOOK
PLACE AS FAR BACK AS THREE WEEKS AGO.
MOON

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